

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 017274

NODIS
WHITE HOUSE FOR Z BRZEZINSKI

FOL RPT PARIS 2023 SENT ACTION SECSTATE DTD 21 JAN 78

QUOTE: S E C R E T PARIS 02023

NODIS

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-3
TAGS: IT FR US
SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION - CONSULTATIONS WITH ALLIES

REF: A) STATE 8959 B) PARIS 1156

1. FOLLOWING INTERIM CONVERSATION WITH
FRANCOIS-PONCET REPORTED REF B, I MET WITH HIM
JANUARY 19 TO CONVEY POINTS OUTLINED
DEPARTMENT'S REFTEL A.

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2. FRANCOIS-PONCET EVIDENTLY REVIEWED THE
ITALIAN ISSUE WITH GISCARD BEFORE RECEIVING ME.
HE BEGAN BY VOLUNTEERING THAT THERE WERE INDEED
SLIGHT DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE
SITUATION AS BETWEEN THE QUAI AND THE FRENCH
EMBASSY IN ROME. THE FORMER, BEING FARTHER

REMOVED, REMAINS CONVINCED THAT THE ITALIANS WILL CONTINUE TO MUDDLE THROUGH AND THAT ANDREOTTI WILL SOMEHOW MANAGE TO SUSTAIN HIS TIGHT-ROPE ACT.

3. GISCARD, ON THE OTHER HAND, LIKE THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN ROME, TENDS TO BE MORE CONSERVATIVE AND ASSESSES THE ITALIAN SITUATION WITH CONSIDERABLE SERIOUSNESS. WHILE EVEN ELYSEE HAD CONSIDERED PARTS OF QUAI'S PUBLIC REACTION TO THE US STATEMENT TOO SOFT, THERE HAS CERTAINLY BEEN NO CHANGE IN ELYSEE'S INTRINSIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE DANGERS OF CP PARTICIPATION IN A GOI. FRANCOIS-PONCET ILLUSTRATED POINT BY RECITING HOW, IN EVERY FRENCH LOCALITY, GREATER CP ACTIVISM AND TACTICAL PERSEVERANCE AND AGILITY SERVE AS A CONSTANT REMINDER OF THE THREAT THEY POSE.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, FRANCOIS-PONCET WAS VERY RESTRAINED AS TO THE HELP FRENCH COULD OFFER AS A RESULT OF THEIR CURRENT PRE-ELECTORAL CONSTRAINTS. CERTAINLY, HE STRESSED AGAIN, THE ELYSEE WAS CONCERNED. WHATEVER HAD BEEN SAID PUBLICALLY BY GOF ABOUT THE US STATEMENT HAD BEEN SAID FOR DOMESTIC REASONS. AND THE GOF'S COMMENTS WERE IN ANY CASE NOT INTENDED AS A CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S APPROACH TOWARD ITALY; ALTHOUGH THE
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ELYSEE DID HAVE THE IMPRESSION FROM CERTAIN CONTACTS WITH HIGH-LEVEL US OFFICIALS LAST SPRING THAT WE WERE THEN A SHADE MORE RELAXED ABOUT EUROCOMMUNISM. BE THAT AS IT MAY, FRANCOIS-PONCET ADMITTED THAT THE US STATEMENT MIGHT HAVE HAD A USEFUL BRAKING EFFECT IN ITALY. ON THE OTHER HAND, STATEMENTS CAN AT BEST ONLY POSTPONE THE EVIL DAY, WHICH WILL COME UNLESS THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE ITALIAN PROBLEM ARE RESOLVED.

4. FOR THE PRESENT THE FRENCH THEMSELVES DID NOT KNOW WHAT MORE MIGHT USEFULLY BE DONE. EVEN DISCREET FRENCH ACTIONS RAN THE RISK OF BEING LEAKED IN THE PRESENT SUPERCHARGED POLITICAL CLIMATE AND SO COULD CAUSE GISCARD SERIOUS POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT. FOR NOW, THEREFORE, AT LEAST THERE WAS NOT TOO MUCH WE SHOULD EXPECT THE FRENCH TO DO.

5. IN CONCLUDING I ASKED FRANCOIS-PONCET WHAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES HAD BEEN IN IVORY COAST UNDER WHICH GISCARD'S COMMENT ON NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS HAD BEEN MADE IN LIGHT OF ABIDJAN'S 6969. HE SAID STORY COULD BE TRUE, BUT THAT HE COULD NOT CLARIFY. WHATEVER ORIGINS OF STATEMENT IT WAS

THE IMPACT OF VERSION CIRCULATED HERE WHICH
COUNTS.

6. COMMENT: EVIDENTLY ELYSEE AGREES TO SERIOUSNESS
OF ITALIAN SITUATION BUT, FOR DOMESTIC REASONS,
FEELS THAT ITS HANDS ARE TIED. EVEN SO WE WOULD
NOT BE SURPRISED IF GISCARD MIGHT STILL TAKE
CERTAIN PERSONAL STEPS IN ROME WITHOUT TELLING US
OR MIGHT WANT TO GO OVER WHOLE ITALIAN PROBLEM
WHEN HE MEETS WITH SCHMIDT IN FEBRUARY 5-6
FRANCO-GERMAN SUMMIT.

7. FOR SS: PLEASE PASS ROME, USNATO, BONN.
GAMMON UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER
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